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8. — *Allgemeine Geschichte der Literatur des Mittelalters im Abendlande*, von ADOLF EBERT. *Erster Band. Geschichte der Christlich-Lateinischen Literatur von ihren Anfängen bis zum Zeitalter Karls des Grossen*. Leipzig. 1874. 8vo. pp. xii, 624.

NOWHERE is the progress of modern scholarship so apparent as in the change which has taken place in the methods of literary history. It is true that this change is, from one point of view, a confession of weakness; from another, it is merely an acknowledgment of the limits which nature has placed to all human efforts.

The old school of literary historians thought their task accomplished when they had given more or less complete biographies of the principal authors, with lists of their works, and, occasionally, extracts or criticisms. The new school recognizes in literature the highest exponent of the national life of a people, and seeks to explain the origin and growth of a literature by reference to the political and social history of the nation. When this shall be combined with an accurate account of individual writers and sound criticism of their works we shall have a perfect literary history. This explains the rarity of good histories of literature, and why they always appear so late. It is difficult, if not impossible, for any one man to make the original researches involved in a history of any literature and language in their relations to the national life of a people. A good literary history presupposes the labors of generations in particular fields.*

The book before us fulfils in so remarkable a degree the requirements of a perfect literary history, that we do not hesitate to pronounce it a model work, and recommend the study of its plan and execution to all those interested in this department of literature. It is, as the general title states, the first volume of a work intended to embrace the entire mediæval literature of Europe, and contains the history of the Christian Latin literature from its origin to the time of Charlemagne.

There is no need at this day of dwelling upon the want of a good history of mediæval literature. There are many excellent monographs upon separate authors and periods, the various literatures have more or less complete histories, but a thorough and comprehensive survey of the whole field was wanting. Such a history, written

* See admirable essay on *Settimbriniedi suoi Critici*, by F. De Sanctis, in *Nuovi Saggi Critici*, Napoli, 1872.

from the stand-point of modern criticism, will overthrow many of the prejudices fostered by an ignorance of a period so incorrectly termed the Dark Ages.

In our opinion one of the greatest services done to literature by the Romantic school was the radical change it wrought in certain canons of taste and criticism which had previously been applied to literary productions. An excellent example of the old school is found in Bouterwek's *Geschichte der Poesie und Beredsamkeit seit dem XIII. Jahrhundert*, the object of which, the author states, is "to trace the progress of taste."

For Bouterwek and his school the real mediæval literature was "Gothic," which with him was synonymous with barbarous. Hence his contempt for popular works, his slighting criticisms of such poems as the *Cid* in Spanish, and his fragmentary treatment of everything except the classical periods. The results of the Romantic reaction are too well known to be dwelt on here; those who wish to find these results, as applied to literary history, in their most perfect form will do well to read Ferdinand Wolf's masterly review of Bouterwek's *History of Spanish Literature* in his volume of *Studien*.

Aside, however, from all æsthetic questions, the literary history of the Middle Ages is valuable and interesting for two reasons: it reveals the existence of a universal literature such as has existed at no time before nor since, and it establishes the continuity between the culture and learning of the ancient and modern world. The universal literature (*Weltliteratur*) which Goethe expected from the future already existed during the Middle Ages; as Ebert remarks in his Preface: "As the culture of Europe during this period is a common one, the product of the influence of the Germanic and Roman nations upon the basis of classical culture, and not the classical Roman-Greek alone, but also the Oriental-Greek, i. e. specifically Christian; so the literature proceeding from this culture, of which it is the expression, is also a common, homogeneous organism. Before the German and Romance languages were sufficiently developed for literary purposes, the language of the mediæval literature of Europe was a common one, the Latin, and this it remained for a long time in separate literary fields, until it gradually, here sooner, there later, was crowded out by the national languages which had arisen by its side. So a common Latin mediæval literature not only precedes the literatures of the European peoples, but for a long time goes hand in hand with them. The language of this literature was not a dead one: it was not only written but spoken; it was not only the language of Science and Religion, but also of the State; it was heard in the drinking-

song as well as in the street-songs of the *Vaganten* ; for a long time it influenced and was influenced by the popular languages, the style of which it formed, and not only increased their store of words but borrowed from them as well as created many new words from their own roots, the best proof of its own life ! This Latin literature therefore forms an integral part of that literary organism ; without a knowledge of it a full comprehension of the history of one of the separate national literatures is as little, nay, less possible, as without the knowledge of the other most important sister literatures.

“ It has, as it were, reared the national literatures : it has not only given them examples and models for their various departments, but under its influence the poetic forms as well as the prose style of the national literatures have been developed.”

This Latin literature is the subject of Ebert's first volume, and he follows it back to its beginning, a date, it is true, which lies far beyond the boundaries of the Middle Ages. This was, however, necessary both for the historical comprehension of the subject, and in order to show clearly the transmission of the elements of culture which this Latin literature contains, and which determine the character of the Middle Ages, as well as its national literatures. Ebert considers this Christian-Latin literature only in its relation to mediæval literature and as a part of it ; consequently he examines only the literature which was universal, which represented the later national literatures and directly influenced them. Hence he excludes scientific literature, except in so far as it influenced the entire Christian society of the day ; so, for instance, he only mentions exceptionally dogmatic-speculative and polemic-theological works.

So much for the fundamental idea of the work which is carried out in a masterly manner ; and the result is a book of interest even to those whose attention has not been specially directed to this field, which for so long a time has been considered the exclusive domain of the theologian.

A glance at the table of contents will show how few of the great writers of this period have come down to us ; a few we know merely by name, some are remembered as the authors of hymns which are still sung by the modern church. The greater number, however, are as forgotten as though they had never lived ; nevertheless, Ebert has been able to invest them with a personal interest ; he gives excellent biographies of the individual writers and careful analyses of their works, which enable those not previously acquainted with them to follow the author's argument perfectly, and, if need be, correct it by his own materials. The author himself, in his Preface, says that he

has expended the greatest industry upon this part of his work, as he considers it of the highest importance. He gives not merely the simple contents of a work, but endeavors to show its composition, its divisions and their grouping, its transitions, and thus objectively the being of the work and the art of the author; and, while giving the reader a clew to the whole work, he has, by the citation of chapter, verse, etc., made it possible for him to acquaint himself more thoroughly with particular points. Such details as are of special importance for mediæval literature have been introduced into the analyses or notes. The present volume is divided into three books: the first embraces the period from Minucius Felix to Constantine, the second to the death of Augustine, and the third to Charlemagne. The first book is preceded by an Introduction, in which is given an admirably clear view of the spread of Christianity and its final victory.

As an example of Ebert's method, we will select one of the most interesting figures of the whole work, — Tertullian. In a note the author gives a list of Tertullian's works, indicating the editions he has used by an asterisk, together with the most important monographs, etc., relating to the subject.

The first great Christian writer, the advocate Minucius Felix, represents the school whose object was to assimilate the classical Hellenic-Roman culture to the genius of Christianity. The second great name, Tertullian, the contemporary of Felix in his youth, represents an entirely opposite tendency. This new direction, influenced by anti-Roman, Oriental-Semitic culture, places no value on the beauty of external form and completeness. The writers of this school belong principally to Africa, and its representative man is Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, born in 160 A.D. at Carthage, the son of the Roman proconsul's centurion. His parents were heathen, and he received, as his works plainly show, all the culture afforded by his native city, then one of the principal seats of learning in the Roman Empire.

He was so familiar with Greek, that he wrote later as a Christian several works in that language which have unfortunately been lost. His eloquent style shows that he visited the schools of rhetoric with profit. It seems probable that he devoted himself to the study of law, with the intent to make it the profession of his life. While still young he became a Christian and a presbyter in Carthage. His conversion was brought about by the constancy of the martyrs and the power of the Christians over those possessed by evil spirits. He soon developed in the interest of his new faith a literary activity that reached its height under Severus and Caracalla. In middle age he openly joined the sect of Montanists, to whose religious views his disposition

must have inclined him from the beginning. From their stand-point not a few of his writings are composed, in which he attacks the Catholic Church as fiercely as he formerly had heathendom. According to Hieronymus he reached an extreme old age, and must have died towards the end of the first half of the third century.

Ebert then gives a concise account of him as a writer, and characterizes him as one of the most genial, original, and productive of the Christian-Latin authors. Then follows an account of his philosophical tendencies and doctrines, and an examination of his style and Latinity. It is customary to term the latter "African," and thus explain all that is exceptional and surprising. This is very incorrect; Tertullian borrowed from the entire field of conversational Latin, and what are usually called Africanisms are almost all those peculiarities of the Roman conversational and familiar language which are preserved in the Romance languages, which no one now thinks were developed in Africa.

Tertullian's writings are divided into three classes; those of an apologetic and polemical nature, didactic, and polemic-dogmatic writings directed against the heretics, Jews, and, from his Montanistic stand-point, against the Catholic Church. These works are all carefully arranged and examined in turn, analyses are given, and references by book, chapter, and page to the most important passages. These *resumés* and analyses cannot be too highly praised; they are models of condensation and completeness, and enable the general reader, as we have before remarked, to follow perfectly the author's line of argument. Such is an incomplete outline of Ebert's method. It must be borne in mind, of course, that his work is not a mere collection of separate articles, but a continuous and well-united historical survey of the literature of the period, and the circumstances, political and otherwise, by which it was controlled and modified.

It is sincerely to be hoped that the author's age and duties as a general writer and university professor will permit him to finish a work for which his varied attainments, and not least his great ability as a bibliographer, so admirably fit him.

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9. — *Essays on the Languages, Literature, and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, etc.* By B. H. HODGSON, Esq., etc. London: Trübner & Co. 1874.

As regards communicating information to others, next best to knowing a thing is the not professing to know it; for right there is